

A photograph of a classroom with several children. In the foreground, a young boy is sitting at a desk, looking towards the camera. In the background, a girl is standing and talking, and another child is raising their hand. A chalkboard with math problems is visible behind them.

Chapter 3
Age-Level
Characteristics

Overview

- Children in Preschool and Kindergarten (3, 4, & 5 years)
- Children in the Primary Grades (6, 7, & 8 years)
- Children in the Elementary Grades (9 & 10 years)
- Youth in Middle School (11, 12, & 13 years)
- Youth in High School (14, 15, 16, & 17 years)
- Selecting Technologies for Different Age Levels

Physical Characteristics of Children in Preschool and Kindergarten

- Children are extremely active
- Children need frequent rest periods
- Children's large muscles are more developed than than those that control fingers and hands
- Eye-hand coordination is still developing
- Children's bodies are flexible and resilient
- Gender differences do not emerge until kindergarten

Social Characteristics of Children in Preschool and Kindergarten

- Most children have one or two best friends, but these friendships change rapidly
- Play activities contribute to social, emotional, and cognitive development, and should be encouraged
- Children show preferences for gender of play peers and for pair vs. group play
- Awareness of gender roles and gender typing is evident

Emotional Characteristics of Children in Preschool and Kindergarten

- Children tend to express their emotions freely and openly, with anger bursts being frequent
- Jealousy among classmates is fairly common as these children tend to have much affection for their teacher and actively seek approval

Cognitive Characteristics of Children in Preschool and Kindergarten

- Children begin to develop a theory of mind
- Children are becoming quite skillful with language
- Many children overestimate their competence for particular tasks
- Competence is encouraged by interaction, interest, opportunities, and signs of affection

Parenting Styles

- **Authoritative**
 - Establish limits and explain reasons for restrictions; encouraging; warm and affectionate
- **Authoritarian**
 - Make demands and wield power; failure to take into account child's view; lack of warmth
- **Permissive**
 - Disorganized and inconsistent; allow children to make own decisions; make few demands of children
- **Rejecting-neglecting**
 - Make no demands; do not respond to emotional needs of children

Physical Characteristics of Children in the Primary Grades (1-3)

- Children are still extremely active and so need breaks like recess, which enhances their cognitive functioning
- Children still need rest period because they become fatigued easily
- Large-muscle control is still superior to fine coordination
- Children may have difficulty focusing on small print or objects
- Children tend to be extreme in their physical activities
- Bone growth is not yet complete

Social Characteristics of Children in the Primary Grades (1-3)

- Children become somewhat more selective in their choice of friends and are likely to have a more permanent best friend
- Children like organized games but may become overly concerned with rules
- Quarrels are still frequent

Emotional Characteristics of Children in the Primary Grades (1-3)

- Children are sensitive to criticism and ridicule and may have difficulty adjusting to failure
- Most children are eager to please the teacher
- Children of this age are becoming sensitive to the feelings of others

Cognitive Characteristics of Children in the Primary Grades (1-3)

- Children understand that there are different ways to know things and that some ways are better than others
- Children begin to understand that learning and recall are caused by cognitive processes that they can control
- Children of this age do not learn as efficiently as older children
- Talking aloud to oneself (private speech) reaches a peak between the ages of six and seven

Physical Characteristics of Children in the Elementary Grades (4-5)

- Boys and girls become leaner and stronger
- Obesity can become a problem for some children of this age group
- Gender differences in motor skill performance are apparent
- This is a period of relative calm and predictability in physical development

Social Characteristics of Children in the Elementary Grades (4-5)

- The peer group becomes powerful and begins to replace adults as the major source of behavior standards
- Friendships become more selective and gender based
- Organized play continues to contribute to social, emotional, and cognitive development

Emotional Characteristics of Children in the Elementary Grades (4-5)

- Children develop a more global, integrated, and complex self-image
- Self-image composed of self-description, self-esteem, and self-concept
- Disruptive family relationships, social rejection, and school failure may lead to delinquent behavior

Cognitive Characteristics of Children in the Elementary Grades (4-5)

- Children can think logically, although such thinking is constrained and inconsistent
- On simple memory tasks, children this age can perform as well as adolescents or adults
- With more complex memory tasks, the performance of children this age is limited

Physical Characteristics of Adolescents in Middle School

- Physical growth tends to be both rapid and uneven, producing early-maturing and late-maturing patterns of development
- Pubertal development is evident in practically all girls and in many boys
- Concern and curiosity about sex are almost universal

The Impact of Early and Late Maturation on Boys

Maturational Stage	Characteristics as Adolescents	Characteristics as Adults
Early-maturing boys	Self-confident, high in self-esteem, likely to be chosen as leaders	Self-confident, responsible, cooperative, sociable, rigid, moralistic, humorless, and conforming
Late-maturing boys	Energetic, bouncy, given to attention-getting behavior, not popular, lower aspirations for educational achievement	Impulsive, assertive, insightful, perceptive, creatively playful, able to cope with new situations

The Impact of Early and Late Maturation on Girls

Maturational Stage	Characteristics as Adolescents	Characteristics as Adults
Early-maturing girls	Not popular or likely to be leaders, indifferent in social situations, lacking in poise	Self-possessed, self-directed, able to cope, likely to score high in ratings of psychological health
Late-maturing girls	Confident, outgoing, assured, popular, likely to be chosen as leaders	Likely to experience difficulty adapting to stress, likely to score low in ratings of overall psychological health

Social Characteristics of Adolescents in Middle School

- The development of interpersonal reasoning leads to greater understanding of the feelings of others
- The desire to conform reaches a peak at this age

Stages of Interpersonal Reasoning (Selman, 1980)

- Stage 0 – Egocentric Level
- Stage 1 – Social Information Role Taking
- Stage 2 – Self-reflective Role Taking
- Stage 3 – Multiple Role Taking
- Stage 4 – Social and Conventional System Taking

Emotional Characteristics of Adolescents in Middle School

- View of adolescence as a period of “storm and stress” is exaggerated
- Nevertheless, some students experience anxiety, low self-esteem, and depression
- Middle school students are often self-conscious and self-centered as a result of the continued influence of egocentric thought

Cognitive Characteristics of Adolescents in Middle School

- Middle school students need a classroom environment that is open, supportive, and intellectually stimulating
- Self-efficacy becomes an important influence on intellectual and social behavior

Physical Characteristics of Adolescents in High School

- Most students reach physical maturity and virtually all attain puberty
- Many adolescents are sexually active but the long-term trend is down
- The birthrate for unmarried adolescents has fallen in recent years yet it is still unacceptably high
- The rate of sexually transmitted diseases is also rather high for high school students

Social Characteristics of Adolescents in High School

- Parents and other adults are likely to influence long-range plans
- Peers are likely to influence immediate status
- Girls seem to experience greater anxiety about friendships than boys do
- Many high school students are employed after school
 - Part-time work can have both beneficial and detrimental effects

Emotional Characteristics of Adolescents in High School

- Many psychiatric disorders either appear or become prominent during adolescence
- The most common type of emotional disorder during adolescence is depression
- If depression becomes severe, suicide may be contemplated

Video: Social and Emotional Development: Understanding Adolescents



Cognitive Characteristics of Adolescents in High School

- High school students become increasingly capable of engaging in formal thought, but may not use this ability
- Between the ages of 12 and 16, political thinking becomes more abstract, liberal, and knowledgeable

Selecting Technologies for Different Age Levels

- Using technology to reduce egocentrism and develop interpersonal reasoning
 - Kidlink, videoconferences, e-mail exchanges, social networking (Web 2.0) websites
- Effect of technology on cognitive development
 - Adventure learning programs